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A Sound of a Going in the Tops of the Mulberry Trees*

MOVEMENTS in the spirits of men often appear first among students in colleges and universities. It is there that today one looks for signs of the activity of God, as among ancient Hebrews the breeze-blown leaves suggested a Divine Presence animating the trees. Such a spiritual movement is plainly discernible on the campuses of our country.

It is not visible in evangelistic meetings; although where religion is intelligently presented by competent spokesmen students attend in numbers. Nor is there a marked improvement in personal morals in such matters as drinking and sex; but there has been a vast stride forward in social ethics. Students are taking the lead in bettering race relations, and their minds are far more open and their consciences more sensitive than those of their parents to economic injustices. Occasional members of college faculties still continue to give smart "digs" at religion, but these are a laggard group of a past epoch, and such cheap humor does not evoke the laughter it once did.

The conspicuous change is in the interest in the Christian church. Those of us who are elderly remember how preachers in college pulpits distinguished between Christianity and "Churchianity"; how disparagingly they spoke of creeds; how they stressed the trifling amount of theology a Christian need carry to follow Christ. This was supposed to render the Christian faith more palatable to the educated. But such a presentation of the Gospel is hopelessly obsolete with the current generation of American students. History, in whose events they have had to take so grim a part, has altered their outlook. Their eyes are upon this hazardous world, upon our nation's responsible role in its affairs, upon the qualities of mind and conscience requisite in citizens capable of winning and maintaining a just and friendly fellowship of mankind.

To them Christianity appeals as an ideology—a view of man and his world, of history and its mean-

ing. A book by a deservedly popular writer bears the title "Creed or Chaos." The church, the corporate embodiment of the Christian community, is an essential conviction in the creed which grips their minds. It rightly appears to them a chief factor on the historic scene—the institution, divine in essence and design, however marred by its human members and however faulty in its present organization, through which God is seeking to redeem a sin-devastated world.

The church's leadership, consequently, assumes a new and momentous aspect in the eyes of the more thoughtful. Outstanding students—the type who a decade ago would have been enlisted for medicine or the law or business—seriously consider, and often decide for, the Christian ministry. There is a notable increase in men of the highest calibre, in intellect and in personal charm, who are applying at divinity schools or are preparing themselves for teaching and for public or other social service.

It is in the thoughtfulness, the moral maturity, of these young people (for they include young women as well as men) that one feels assured of the Divine presence and working. Theirs is not that "barren levity of mind," of which William Watson complained a half century ago. Older divines insisted on the indispensable role which *consideration* plays in conversion. God alone converts, and God alone moves to sincere consideration. There is no question but that large numbers of students are considering, and such sustained thought on the issues of our imperiled day is leading them to the necessity of spiritual solutions for these issues. Inevitably this brings to their consideration the Christian Gospel, and the Christian church as its bearer to mankind and the community in which it is alive in power.

The "sound of a going" in the tree-tops is as yet no loud rustle. It is not "the rushing of a mighty wind." But it is, perhaps, the more encouraging for its softness. The pelting downpour of a sharp thunderstorm does not do anything like as much for our

* II. Samuel 5:24.

droughty soil and depleted water supply as the rain which begins quietly and continues steadily. And whatever may be its continuance and total result, there is certainly the beginning of a descent of the Spirit of God plainly evident in the thinking and dedication of life among the present student generation. If we believe, as indeed we must, that God has come in judgment upon us in the break-up of our Western world, we must also believe that He has come and is coming in mercy to redeem men to Himself. There are other conspicuous signs of His activity in His church, especially in the ecumenical movement and in the conviction of almost

all thinking Christians that the wasteful and sinful divisions of the Body of Christ must be done away; but no sign is more heartening than that of these able and delightful students offering themselves for the church's ministry and for callings which mould characters. They are under no illusion as to the difficulty of the tasks which they confront. They are asking for no rewards in social position or in the esteem of men, and they know that their financial returns will be slender. They see a supremely urgent undertaking, and there is in their consciences a stirring which to them is "the going" here and now of the living God.—H.S.C.

The World Council of Churches and the Struggle Between East and West

W. A. VISSER 't HOOFT

This comprehensive analysis of the position of the World Council of Churches toward the political struggle of our time was originally prepared as a confidential document by the General Secretary of the Council, Dr. Visser 't Hooft. We are glad that it has now been made available for the general public, and are therefore publishing it in the belief it will be of great value to our readers.

THIS article is an attempt to clarify the confused situation which has arisen during the last few months as a result of new developments particularly in Eastern Europe, and of the reactions of the Western churches and the Western press.

1) The Standpoint of the Amsterdam Assembly

The First Assembly of the World Council resisted all attempts to draw it into the field of power politics or to make it into a voice which would directly or indirectly bless one of the parties in the great ideological conflict of our time. Amsterdam (especially through the report of the Third Section) refused to identify itself with any of the present established systems and thus underlined the fundamental independence of the church in relation to all political and social ideologies.

Does this mean that Amsterdam took a purely neutral attitude? No. For it gave a specific judgment on Communism, and another different one on *laissez-faire* capitalism. It did not say that the present systems are equally bad and did not propose to the church to turn its back upon the world. It reminded the church of its prophetic function of speaking out concretely concerning the main tendencies of the political and social life of our generation.

The Assembly attempted to draw men away from the false assumption that the present forces represent the only possible alternatives. It spoke of the responsibility of Christians to seek new creative solutions which do not allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other.

Amsterdam has, therefore, really said that it is the task of the church to find a better way which cuts across the present conflict and should lead the world out of its present sterile dilemma.

2) The Development Since Amsterdam

In the months since Amsterdam the international situation has developed in such a way that it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the position formulated at Amsterdam. First of all the general political situation has deteriorated. The conflict has become even sharper than it was. There is even less "vital space" for a third position. Secondly the trials of church leaders and other measures taken by Communist Governments with regard to the churches have made a very deep impression on the Western churches and on public opinion generally. It was only in the last days of the Assembly that the imprisonment of Bishop Ordass became known and that was the first important case of its kind. Today we know of a number of church leaders who have been imprisoned with or without trial. In the third place the anti-Communist propaganda has become much more self-conscious and articulate. The Vatican especially takes an increasingly definite and unilateral anti-Communist stand and some Roman Catholic Church leaders are using the terminology of a fully fledged anti-Communist crusade.

In these circumstances the question arises whether the World Council can really maintain the position which it has taken at its First Assembly. Must that position be qualified in the light of more recent developments? Or have we good reasons to maintain it today in spite of all pressure to the contrary?

3) *Is There a Religious Persecution in Eastern Europe?*

All reports indicate that the pressure on the churches in Communist controlled areas is constantly increasing. The most important facts are: the secularizing of Christian schools, the forbidding of Christian youth movements and periodicals, interference with the choice of church leaders or their forced resignation, forbidding of direct relationships with churches in other lands or ecumenical bodies, and last but not least the imprisonment of prominent church leaders.

As one studies these various measures one is forced to the conclusion that there lies behind them a very definite common policy. But the question arises as to what the precise nature of this policy is. And the most difficult issue is: do the Communist leaders aim at present at the destruction of the Christian churches and at the extermination of Christianity, or has their policy a more restricted goal?

On the basis of the available evidence it would seem that the main elements of the present policy are as follows:

a) The churches must not be allowed to have any influence on public life.

b) They should, therefore, be brought under strict government control.

c) Church leaders who defend the pre-revolutionary situation, who criticize the present regime or who are in close touch with the West should be gradually eliminated.

d) Youth is to be educated in the Marxist way and Christian schools or youth movements are, therefore, to be gradually abolished.

e) Churches should not be allowed to have any direct contacts with their sister churches or ecumenical bodies in the West.

f) The Roman Catholics are especially dangerous; the Protestants are dangerous in so far as they remain in contact with the West; the Orthodox are to be related to the Moscow Patriarchate as an important center of Russian and Slav propaganda.

In this list we have not mentioned the purpose to abolish the Christian churches. At this point a great deal of Western propaganda overshoots the mark. For the available evidence does not prove that that is at the present moment an objective of Communist policy. On the contrary in several countries Communist Governments are subsidizing churches and theological faculties. They go out of their way to declare that they are not antagonistic to the churches. And there is no evidence that the governments

organize anti-religious campaigns such as took place in Russia during the early stages of the Revolution.

Does this mean that the Communists have decided to allow the churches to exist on certain conditions? And is there any truth in the statements made by the governments concerned, and repeated by their friends in the West, that in these countries there is religious liberty? In order to answer these questions we have to look into the presuppositions of Marxist thought and politics.

4) *The Marxist Conception of Religious Liberty*

Much of the deep misunderstanding in this field is due to the fact that the terminology of the Marxists differs fundamentally from the terminology to which we are accustomed in the Western world. Thus the statement made by Communist spokesmen that there is real religious liberty in the Eastern European countries is not a conscious falsehood. It is rather a statement which is true in a purely Marxist context, but untrue in a Western context. This can be shown in the following way.

a) *What Marxists mean by "Religion".* The Marxist concept of religion is very much narrower than the Western concept. Marx himself considered religion as a purely other-worldly affair. Russian Communism finds this concept applicable to its own experience, for it is confronted with an Eastern Orthodoxy which is primarily sacramental and liturgical. Thus when Russian Communists or Communists under Russian control speak about religion they think exclusively of worship and of the holding of religious services. This becomes clear by the example of the Russian amendment to Article 16 of the Declaration of Human Rights. This amendment spoke of "freedom to perform religious services." In other words Russian Communism considers that whatever goes beyond the actual life of worship of the church is not really "religion," but represents an interference of religion with other realms of life which have nothing to do with religion.

b) *What Marxists mean by "Liberty".* Similarly the Marxists use "liberty" in a sense which is completely different from the Western conception. Marx felt that men could not possibly be free under a system of capitalism since that system by its very nature means according to him: exploitation. Engels coined the often quoted phrase "liberty is the realization of necessity." Freedom or liberty in Marxist language, therefore, means the situation of men who enter into the new era in which the proletariat fulfills its historical destiny and takes its own fate in hand. Freedom is there where society and the State are the expression of the will of the proletariat. The Foreign Minister of Bulgaria stated on February 2: "The church is also under the people's sovereignty. . . . It is neither admissible nor tolerable for churches and ecclesiastical officials in Bulgaria

to preach against the foundations of the people's democracy." And the Russian amendment to Article 16 speaks of freedom "in accordance with the laws of the country concerned."

To Western minds this seems like hypocrisy. To Marxist minds this is a most justifiable use of words. The trouble about the Dean of Canterbury and other advocates of Communism in the West is that they do not explain that in maintaining that there is religious liberty in Eastern Europe they are in fact misleading the West, because they use Marxist terminology in speaking to a public which can only think in traditional Western categories.

c) *What Marxists mean by "Tactics"*. We come then to the conclusion that the Marxists mean what they say when they proclaim religious liberty. But that amounts only to the fact that in the present stage they do not want to exterminate Christianity and that they allow Christians to hold their religious services. This leads to the further problem as to whether this is just a tactical maneuver. Is not the present acceptance of the church on certain conditions simply a hypocritical move which will necessarily lead to more definitely anti-Christian action at a later stage?

Here we come to another terminological misunderstanding. The word "tactics" has a very special and unique meaning in the Marxist vocabulary. Tactics in the Marxist sense do not mean action which contradicts the ideal or norm. Tactics represent the true answer to the present situation. The right tactics are according to them the measures which are dictated by the course of history itself, that is to say by the interests of the proletariat which is the only organ of history.

We can, therefore, say that every move which Communism makes is by its very nature a matter of tactics. In this sense the tolerance shown to a purely pietistic or liturgical form of religion is certainly "tactics." But that means simply that things being what they are the Communists allow the churches to live on certain conditions. No one, not even Stalin himself, can say whether this situation will last. For that depends on the course of history. The ultimate ideal is certainly to have a society without church and without religion. But that does not necessarily mean that within a given period of time anti-religious propaganda on a large scale will begin again. In this matter much will depend on the whole historical development and not least on the vitality shown by the churches concerned.

The question arises in this connection whether the Communists are not afraid that the message of the churches will undermine Communism. The answer is that they are not afraid of the churches *if these churches remain merely worshipping churches*. For such churches in the Marxist view are a "bourgeois" phenomenon which will automatically disappear when bourgeois society is transformed into the new

collectivized society. The Communists, therefore, want the church to remain in that sense bourgeois. It must not speak *against* the new regime, but it must not become either a progressive church which preaches a religious socialism. For such a church might indeed begin to compete with the party. Religious persecution is not necessary in the present "tactical" situation. What is necessary to keep the church in the place where it belongs and that place is the narrow, historically irrelevant one of other-worldliness.

We must therefore come to the conclusion that for the time being (and that may mean for a very long period) Communist policy is not the extermination of the churches but their *domestication*. They are allowed to exist if they will in no way go against the policies of the Government and stick to that very restricted field of activity which religion should occupy according to the Marxist view.

5) *The Trials in Budapest and Sofia*

In the light of Marxist conceptions, the trials in Budapest and Sofia should, therefore, be conceived not so much as an attempt to start another persecution of the church, but rather as an attempt to bring the churches in line with the new political order. From the point of view of Communism it was, of course, a very great advantage that in the cases of the most advertised trials, namely those of Cardinal Mindszenty and the pastors in Bulgaria, they could present church leaders as reactionaries. The fact that Cardinal Mindszenty had obviously been closely connected with monarchist and feudal groups outside and inside his country, and the fact that the Bulgarian pastors maintained close relations with America, the country of "reaction," made the holding of these trials extremely attractive from the point of view of propaganda. At the same time it would seem that before holding these trials the Communists had good reason to believe that the church leaders concerned would not really fight back. It is not very probable that any particular drugs have been used, but it is quite clear that strong moral and perhaps also physical pressure has been brought to bear on the accused. The Communists make a great publicity stunt out of trials which will serve their purpose. That is why the Mindszenty and the Bulgarian trials have been publicized much more than the Ordass trial. And that is why it is most regrettable that the Western press has unconsciously played into the hands of the Communists by giving much more publicity to the trials of men who (according to Communist standards) had been involved in some form of politics, rather than to the trial of Bishop Ordass whose stand was not determined by political, but by purely spiritual motives.

In the cases of Mindszenty and of the Bulgarian pastors the Western world was put before a dilemma. If the West defends them it proves that they are

indeed its spokesmen and spies. If it does not defend them, it shows its bad conscience. Unfortunately very few in the West have seen this. The political obsession has already gone so far that it becomes almost impossible to speak about these matters in a dialectical form. What we can and should say is that *in spite of* the political stand which they have taken, and with which the church cannot identify itself, we must protest against the shameful treatment to which they have been submitted by the Courts. The church can and must say clearly that Communism in Eastern Europe is building up a totalitarian society in which no one is allowed to hold a political opinion which differs from the official one.

6) *The Attitude of the Churches in Eastern Europe and China*

We must remember that the churches in Eastern Europe have to face an almost impossible situation. Historically they have been more closely connected with the political and social pre-revolutionary forces than churches in other parts of the world. They have to jump out of the 18th century situation in which church, state and society overlapped in so many ways, into the situation of the present in which the church finds itself suddenly regarded as a dangerous and undesirable relic of the past. They do not enter into this new era with a tradition of prophetic speaking to the powers that be. It is, therefore, not astonishing that they should show signs of deep uncertainty.

a) *The Orthodox Churches.* The historical development of Eastern Orthodoxy has been such that the more prophetic elements in its tradition have generally been suppressed, and that the church has in fact accepted the almost complete separation between the realm of the church (conceived primarily as a worshipping community) and the realm of the world. At the same time the church has often agreed to support the State in the realm in which the latter was considered to have unconditional authority. Until the Russian revolution this was done with the understanding that the State was a *Christian* state.

The present leaders of the Church of Russia and of the churches under the direct influence of that church maintain that same attitude, although the state has now become a Marxist state. Thus they maintain that they have no concern with politics, but they act at the same time as spokesmen of the present regime. It is quite clear that in this matter in the Church of Russia, and especially in the other Orthodox Churches under Communist regimes, there is considerable difference of opinion as to just how far the church should go. But it is also clear that the Conference last summer in Moscow represents a victory for those who desire to be in tune with present governmental policies over those who seek to maintain a measure of spiritual independence. It is important to remember that the official utter-

ances of the Moscow Conference and of the Journal of the Patriarchate do not represent the general attitude of Orthodox Christians behind the iron curtain. There is considerable evidence that many of the leaders are extremely eager to maintain contacts with the Western churches and with the World Council of Churches.

b) *The Protestant Churches.* The Protestant Churches find it even harder to readjust themselves. They have a strong sense of belonging to the Western tradition and cannot, therefore, easily accept the new and very restricted conception of their mission. But they are numerically too weak and have too little spiritual power to start a church conflict comparable to the conflicts between the confessing churches and national-socialism. Moreover the question of the precise point on which they should take their stand is a matter of great difficulty. There are some who feel that they should not give in at any point. But these are not backed up by their churches. Most of the church leaders consider that a general resistance would in fact make the church a center of reaction.

Some of these leaders take the position that since the church has in the past not fulfilled its prophetic function in relation to great social evils which are now being tackled by Communism, it has no right to fulfill that function today. They believe that the only possible attitude in the present situation is one of repentance and of concentration on the message of personal conversion. They feel that the church should only resist if a new situation arises (which does not exist today) in which the church is no longer allowed to preach the Christian message or if that message is interfered with. Others, perhaps not many, believe that the church has always a prophetic function and that its past silence cannot justify its present silence. They are, however, convinced that the message of the church in social and political affairs must not be *less* revolutionary but *more* revolutionary than the message of Communism. But this message the church will only be able to proclaim, if it has let itself be purified and if God gives it the word which will speak to the condition of man in a collectivistic society.

The churches concerned are deeply aware that their future depends on a renewal of their life. It is realized that unless the church develops new forms of common life, and unless the laity can be mobilized, the church in the new situation can have no future. There is remarkable evidence that once again the pressure upon the churches produces unexpected spiritual fruits.

In this connection we must think especially of China where a young and small church is confronted with a powerful revolutionary force. How some of the Christian leaders in China view that situation can be seen from a letter from Professor T. C. Chao, one of the Presidents of the World Council. He

says: "One is thrilled at the dangers and opportunities confronting Christianity in mingled proportions. As a human being, one trembles at the thought of the impotence of the church and the lack of creative leadership and the silence of the prophetic voice. But God has guided us and will continue to guide. Under Him we shall see that we have not faithfully worshiped Him, but instead revered numerous idols which long ago should have been overthrown. The Chinese Communists as well as many of us who fear, do not know that Christianity thrives in times of persecution and suffering."

7) *We Are Committed to Religious Liberty*

What then should be the attitude of the World Council of Churches in this situation? The starting point is surely that we are committed to religious liberty. And we mean by that the full religious liberty which has been explained and developed in the declaration on Religious Liberty adopted by the Assembly. For that liberty is not simply a Western concept. It is rooted in the nature of the Gospel itself. We must, therefore, reject the Marxist restrictions on religious liberty. We believe in the Lordship of Christ and in the right of the church to proclaim the implications of this belief for relationships in a social or political community. We cannot give up this central conviction without giving up the very substance of the ecumenical movement. In this matter we cannot compromise with the Moscow Patriarchate or with any other church or government which denies the right of the church to exercise its prophetic ministry.

It is, therefore, surely our pastoral responsibility toward the churches in Eastern Europe to remind them of this mission. We must do so in a humble spirit because the Western churches have not really been prophetic. They have forgotten this fundamental aspect of their task during long periods and they are by no means making the right use of their freedom to speak out which they have in the Western world. Moreover we must realize that in reminding the churches under Communist regimes of this responsibility we are really asking them to do the impossible. We can only do it in fear and trembling and with the prayer that the Lord may give those churches the witness and the witnesses which will manifest the power of His spirit.

8) *We Are Not Committed to the Status Quo*

At the same time we must make it abundantly clear that in speaking for full religious liberty and for a prophetic judgment on Communism, we do not in any way defend the pre-revolutionary situation in the countries concerned. We must admit openly that Communism has done away with forms of feudalism against which Christians ought to have protested long ago. We must also make it clear, as we have done in Amsterdam, that we do not de-

fend in toto the system or systems which are now dominating in Western nations. We can only make a truly convincing judgment on Communism if we attack at the same time the evil aspects of the various forms of Western capitalism, and indeed the evils which have crept into the very life of the church.

We must also avoid identifying ourselves with a general anti-Communist crusade. For such a crusade leads to self-righteousness, to blindness with regard to the true challenge of the situation, and to a war-psychology. We cannot afford self-righteousness, for Communism is to a considerable extent the outcome of our own sins of commission and omission. We cannot afford to be blind to the challenge of Communism, because we can only overcome it by dealing with its causes. And we cannot afford war because it would not solve but increase in a catastrophic manner the spiritual, moral and social disintegration of which Communism is only one possible expression.

It must become clear that our stand against Communism is exclusively motivated by Christian convictions. We do not stand against certain social achievements of Communism. We take a stand against its heretical ideology and the imposition of that ideology upon the peoples.

And we must, therefore, bring into our message that note of repentance and self-criticism which alone can save the struggle against Communism from becoming a pure struggle for power.

9) *We Are Committed to New, Creative Solutions*

The Third Section at Amsterdam expressed the conviction that the responsibility of Christians is to seek new creative solutions. We cannot take that responsibility too seriously. If the World Council can really become a center for those who seek a better way it will fulfill a great historic mission.

The expression "the third way" can easily be misunderstood. It can be taken to mean a middle way between two extremes. But that is too static a conception. The third way should not be thought of in terms of space but in terms of time. It is the *new* way, the way of tomorrow. It is the way of those who like "the third race" of primitive Christian times, count with the creative work of the Creator-God in history. It is the search for the solution of the real problems which lie behind the present deadlock between the Eastern and Western systems. It is the realistic tackling of the problems of social disintegration and economic disruption which neither Capitalism nor Communism can solve in a way which is compatible with the dignity of man and with his responsibility to his fellows.

The World Council cannot possibly represent a third *political* force. For it cannot and must not enter into the political arena, and it is incompetent in the field of social and economic decisions. But it can do increasingly what it began to do at Amster-

dam, namely, to indicate a general direction which Christians can and should follow in order to lead the world out of its present impasse.

If it does so it will often be misunderstood. It will be accused by the left and by the right of half-heartedness, and of refusing to choose in a world where only two choices seem to be available. But it will draw to itself that great number of men and women in all churches and nations who look beyond the present situation, who are increasingly troubled about the sterility of the war of the propagandas, and who look to the church for a word of hope which will transcend the present conflict.

10) *Maintaining the Ecumenical Fellowship*

Thus alone can we maintain the ecumenical fellowship. The churches in Eastern Europe and the churches in the Far East say to us with the greatest emphasis that they want to remain in the fellowship. In fact for them the value of their relations with the other churches has greatly increased. Just as the struggling churches under national-socialist domination discovered the full meaning of their membership in the wider church, so the churches under Marxist pressure now realize the price of ecumenical ties. Now we can only remain in contact with them, if we make it quite clear that we are not identified with any political powers. Even so,

it will be hard enough to maintain contacts. Even so our inevitable and necessary reactions to infringements of religious liberty and to totalitarian practices will create formidable tensions. But we must at least try to maintain that difficult but basically Christian position, and make sure that it is not because of our prejudices or mistakes that the contacts are broken off.

The churches concerned feel already that their sister churches in the West do not understand them. And indeed a very great effort of imagination and interpretation is required to help our church leaders and through them our church members in the West to realize the extraordinarily difficult position of our brethren in Communist controlled areas. But the life of the ecumenical fellowship is at stake. This great test comes at a time when the World Council has hardly established itself. And so it would be a miracle if it could prove able to meet it. We must constantly remember that even if the "Eastern" churches cannot take part in the shaping of World Council policy, we are responsible for them, as much or even more than we are for our other churches. We must pray for each other, "Western" churches for "Eastern" churches and "Eastern" churches for "Western" churches that, whatever happens, we may stand together and find together the way through the trials of our time.

The World Church: News and Notes

Protestant Leaders Study World Council Aims

Seventy-four Protestant churchmen from nine countries, including the United States, met in Oxford, England, for a series of conferences on the program and aims of the World Council of Churches as set forth at the Council's First Assembly at Amsterdam last summer.

The conferences were sponsored by the World Council in collaboration with the Churches' Commission for International Affairs. The over-all theme of the discussions was "Christian Action in Society." Countries represented were, besides the United States, Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, and India.

Leading speakers included Dr. John C. Bennett, of Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., who discussed the Christian responsibilities of society, Dr. J. H. Oldham, of the British Council of Churches, who spoke on "The Meaning of Work," and Anglican Bishop Steven Mills, who dealt with problems of evangelism in modern society.

One of the conferences was devoted to a discussion of the Biblical basis of the church's life and message. It was announced that a memorandum would be drafted to serve for further study of "the use of the Bible in different churches."

At this conference, Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen, president of Union Theological Seminary, and a prominent figure in the World Council of Churches, urged that workers in secular fields of activity should submit "relevant questions" to theologians studying the application of Biblical teachings to modern life.

The Rev. E. C. Urwin, British Methodist leader, stressed the sense of spiritual frustration which he said was often found among conscientious workers. He complained that "too often industry is like a jungle," and declared "we have got to clear a way through the undergrowth."

Mr. Urwin was supported by Hans Ehrenberg, a German pastor who was imprisoned in a concentration camp during the war, and Rene Rognon, French Protestant workers' chaplain.

The latter challenged the assumption that the concentration of individuals in modern society always hampers freedom. He said that the old, traditionally rural communities often limited freedom, whereas the modern industrial worker can exercise his right to make decisions.

Dr. Paul Lahmann, of Princeton University, declared that many church people themselves work in industry, and can help "overcome the limited horizon of their fellow Christians."—*Religious News Service*

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150 Attend Mission Conference

One hundred and fifty representatives, including visitors from the Younger Churches in Africa, India, Ceylon, China and the West Indies, attended the annual conference of the British Missionary Societies held at Swanwick, June 14 to June 17.

Though the general theme of the conference was the inner life of the church, outside hindrances to the life and growth of the church were also considered, as well as the present experiences of the Younger Churches, under the heading of "Communism, Materialism and Nationalism."

The delegates heard a vivid account of the voluntary service of lay preachers trained *in situ* in a rural area of China previously occupied by Communists. Here the various Christian agencies of education, medicine, literacy, child welfare and worship have been success-

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fully united in one combined operation to serve and save the total human being.—*E.P.S., Geneva*

MRP Proposes General Amnesty in France

Frenchmen guilty of minor acts of collaboration with the Nazis during World War II would benefit from a general amnesty proposed by the Popular Republican Movement, France's predominantly Catholic political party.

The MRP, as the party is known, has placed the amnesty proposal before the French Assembly with the hope that it will be voted on before the legislators leave on their vacations. It was said that the MRP project is a "modest" one and that party "timidity" on the subject could be explained by the fact that Communists and a certain number of Socialists are almost certain to attack the bill.

Recent reports have indicated a growing desire in France, particularly among Christians, for the release of small-time collaborators and for the reversal of judicial decisions imposing "national indignity" against those whose crimes were ideological or cowardly rather than active opposition to the cause of France.

Under the proposed amnesty, those awaiting trial on collaborationist charges would be released, provided they have not been responsible for murder, torture or provocation to these crimes. It would also cancel the "national indignity" sentences by which individuals lost their civic rights for ten years or less. It would likewise reduce life "indignity" sentences to 20 years.

The amnesty includes, however, a proposal for criminal proceedings against all those guilty of certain "anti-national acts" such as making public statements defending war crimes or atrocities.—*Religious News Service*

CIMADE Forms Summer Training Course

An ecumenical training course has been organized this summer by C.I.M.A.D.E. (Comite Inter-Mouvements Aupres Des Evacues) for its field workers and for young men and women from Latin countries desirous of doing a living work of witness and evangelism in the church.

To be held at Loriol, Drome, from August 27 to September 30, the course will include study of the doctrines and traditions of the main Christian confessions and their experiences in the field of evangelism as represented by a priest, pastor or theologian from the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

The students will also receive training on the Bible, (introduction, exegesis, study), on philosophy, psychology, sociology, and mission and evangelism work.

The courses will be supervised by Bishop Stephen Neill, associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Pastor J. C. Hoekendijk, evangelism secretary of the Council, Mlle. Suzanne de Dietrich, lecturer at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Pastor Greiner, M. P. Evdokimov and Prof. P. Burgelin. A Roman Catholic priest and a French Reformed pastor will also participate. All courses will be given in French.

E.P.S., Geneva